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SUBJECT: UPDATE ON TORONTO TERRORISM SUSPECTS

Ref: (A) 06 Ottawa 1711 (B) 06 Toronto 1636
(C) 06 Toronto 2138 (D) Toronto 132

Sensitive But Unclassified - protect accordingly.

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Since June 2, 2006, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police has arrested 18 men with suspected connections to a Toronto-based terrorist group. The terrorist group is most notorious for its plot to behead the Canadian Prime Minister, Stephen Harper. Currently, 14 adults and 3 youths connected with the group are charged with various counts under Canada's Anti-Terrorism Act and are waiting for their trials. Two adult suspects and three youths have been released on bail. It is possible that more suspects will be released as the trials progress. A media ban is in effect for the trials. END SUMMARY.

June Arrests of Toronto Terrorist Group

12. (SBU) Since June 2, 2006, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) anti-terrorism task force has arrested 18 members of a Toronto-based terrorist group after a two-year investigation. The RCMP organized the arrests after they intercepted an order for three tons of ammonium nitrate fertilizer. The fertilizer was to be used in truck bombs targeting the Toronto offices of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the Toronto Stock Exchange and a Canadian Forces base, as well as the CSIS and RCMP headquarters in Ottawa. The group's alleged plans also included storming Parliament Hill in Ottawa, taking Members of Parliament hostage, and beheading them if Canadian Forces did not leave Afghanistan.

The Suspects and Charges

13. (SBU) All suspects of the terrorist group, 14 adults and 3 youths, are charged with various counts under Canada's Anti-Terrorism Act and are currently awaiting trial. All suspects are charged with knowingly participating in a terrorist group for the purpose of carrying out terrorist activity. Seven of the suspects, Zakaria Amara, Saad Gaya, Fahim Ahmad, Asad Ansari, Shareef Abdelhaleen, Qayyum Abdul Jamal and Saad Khalid, face an additional charge of attempting to acquire three tons of ammonium nitrate and intending to set off an explosion to cause serious bodily harm or death, or substantial property damage.

14. (SBU) Ibrahim Alkhalel Aboud, Jahmaal James, Amin Mohamed Durrani, Steven Chand, Ahmad Ghany, as well as Amara, Ansari, Jamal and Khalid, are charged with receiving training for the purpose of enhancing the ability of a terrorist group to carry out terrorist activity. Amara is also charged with one count of recruiting for a terrorist group.

15. (SBU) Two suspects connected with the group, Mohammed Dirie and Yasmin Mohamed, were already serving two years in prison on weapons smuggling charges at the time of the arrests. Dirie and Mohamed

were apprehended by Canadian authorities at Fort Erie, Ontario's Peace Bridge border crossing coming from the U.S. with two guns and ammunition concealed on their persons. Authorities are now charging them with acquiring the weapons for terrorist activities.

Current Locations and Status of Suspects

¶6. (SBU) Since their June arrests, 10 of the suspects have been held in solitary confinement at Maplehurst Correctional Complex in Milton, Ontario. They are permitted, with some restrictions, to have visits from family members and make phone calls to relatives. Dirie is incarcerated at the Collins Bay correctional institute in Kingston. Mohamed is serving at the Joyceville correctional institute.

¶7. (SBU) Ghany was released on C\$140,000 bail July 21, 2006. His bail conditions forbid him to communicate with the other accused men. He must live with his parents and may not leave the house unless accompanied by one of his four sureties. He is permitted to go to school, work, the hospital or his lawyer's office unattended. He must report to police every Monday. He is not allowed to leave Ontario, is not allowed to possess any weapons and must hand over all travel documents. Aboud was released on C\$145,000 bail in August 2006. His bail conditions are similar to those of Ghany. He is currently enrolled as a student at Ryerson University in Toronto.

¶8. (SBU) Preliminary hearings for four youths of the group were held in Brampton in February. Three 17 and 18-year old men were committed to stand trial on the count of "participating in a terrorist group for the purpose of carrying out terrorist acts." Authorities dropped the charge of receiving training to be part of a terrorist group. The charges against the youngest of the accused

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were stayed, meaning the charges were withdrawn but can be reactivated within a year. One of the teens remains in custody, and two are out on bail. None of those accused of committing crimes as juveniles can be identified under the Youth Criminal Justice Act.

¶9. (SBU) The preliminary inquiry for the 14 adults began in March. They may be tried together or in smaller groups. A publication ban on all information and evidence presented in court remains in place. Coupled with the identity protection provided by the Youth Criminal Justice Act, information concerning these cases will be extremely difficult to obtain.

The Operations of the Group

¶10. (SBU) The case against the 17 suspects started in Internet chat rooms, in a Scarborough school, and a Mississauga Islamic Centre. According to the Crown synopsis given to defense lawyers after the arrests, the group also attended a training camp in a vacant wooded area 150 km north of Toronto, where group members donned camouflage clothing and played paint-ball games.

¶11. (SBU) Toronto media speculated that the eldest of the group, Qayyum Abdul Jamal, had the most strident views and may have been the group leader. He was active at the al-Rahman Islamic Centre, a small storefront Sunni mosque attended by six other suspects. The group allegedly split into two camps as two adult leaders disagreed on tactics. By March 2005, one group included suspects from Toronto and the other consisted of those who lived west of the city.

Diverse Backgrounds in the Group

¶12. (SBU) Most of the suspects come from middle-class families. Their ethnic backgrounds vary, with Egypt, Somalia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Trinidad and Tobago among the countries of origin. Several of the men were born in Canada, and many of them immigrated as young children. Egyptian-born Abdelhaleen, a 30 year-old computer programmer, immigrated to Canada at 10 years of age. Pakistani-born Khalid immigrated at 8 years of age, and was a

student at the University of Toronto. Canadian-born Ghany was a health sciences graduate from McMaster University. Most of the suspects lived with family in the suburbs of Toronto.

¶13. (SBU) COMMENT: The RCMP dragnet scooped up suspects who had varying degrees of involvement in the alleged plot. Charges against one youth were withdrawn. Although most suspects have been denied bail, more suspects may be released as the trials progress. We have submitted to the Visa Viper program the bio data of 14 adults who were charged (refs (B), (C), and (D)). Their trials are likely to drag on for years, with defense lawyers challenging the constitutionality of the charges. END COMMENT.

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